



POLICE REVIEW & ADVISORY BOARD

A department of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Minutes for the Meeting of September 29 2010

Board Members Present: Martin Betts (chair) Alexandra Detjens, Susan Melucci, Richard Peters

Staff Present: Acting Executive Secretary Brian Corr, Deputy Superintendent Christine Elow

Public Present: Geoffrey Derrick, David Kushner, Albert Skane, Bishop Felipe Teixeira, Sarah Wunsch

The meeting began at 6:05 PM.

Board member Melucci moved that the board approve of the minutes of the June 23 and June 28, 2010 meetings, and Board member Peters seconded the motion. After discussion, the minutes were approved in a unanimous vote.

Members of the public were given an opportunity to speak to and ask questions of the Board. Sarah Wunsch of the ACLU of Massachusetts expressed disappointment with both the report of the Cambridge Review Committee and the decision of the Police Review & Advisory Board ("the Board") that it could not consider the arrest of Prof. Gates by Sgt. Crowley. She detailed her concerns about the nature of the arrest and the possibility of violations of Prof. Gates' civil rights. Ms. Wunsch also expressed concern regarding the presence of Cambridge Police personnel at executive sessions of the Board and urged the Board to ensure that executive sessions were held in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. In response to the latter concern, Board Chair Betts explained that Deputy Superintendent Elow has been present to answer questions in connection with the complaints pending before the Board, and leaves before the Board deliberates and makes decisions.

Bishop Teixeira reiterated that in the June 23, 2010 meeting, he suggested that the Board consider a public hearing on the arrest of Prof. Gates, and that he agreed with the concerns raised by Ms. Wunsch.

Albert Skane discussed the idea that Prof. Gates may have seen possible benefit in the publicity that resulted from his arrest, noting that in previous writings, Mr. Skane has supported Prof. Gates.

Acting Executive Secretary Brian Corr introduced himself, explained his background as it applies to the work of the Board, and discussed what he hopes to accomplish in the position. He then gave a report regarding the annual conference of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE), which he and Board member Detjens attended in September. He also discussed this idea of expanding outreach efforts to raise awareness of the Police Review & Advisory Board, its function, and work to educate people about their rights and how best to interact with police.

Deputy Superintendent Christine Elow of the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) reported that she has been asked by Mr. King Downing at a prior meeting about providing a specific breakdown of internal investigations violations of policy and procedures by officers and what discipline was imposed, but she has been advised by the CPD's legal advisor that to do so would violate Mass. General Laws Title XXI, Chapter 149, Section 52C. She also reported that she would be able to report at a future meeting regarding the work of the CPD to respond to the recommendations of the Board, based on discussions she will have with Commissioner Haas. Deputy Superintendent Elow also noted that Lt. Dan Wagner has compiled extensive data on arrests for disorderly conduct, and that the Commissioner is carefully examining all such arrests as they occur. She further discussed training that is being done of the leadership of the CPD on the concept of Legitimacy as described by Prof. Tracey Mears of Yale Law School. In answer to a question from Ms. Wunsch about reported racial disparities during traffic stops, Deputy Superintendent Elow explained that upon investigation there had been clerical errors made when officers filled out form to report traffic stop data, and than perhaps Prof. Jack McDevitt of Northeastern, who has analyzed the data, could speak to the Board about that issue, as well as the work of other civilian review boards, at a future meeting.

Under new business, there was discussion of enhancing outreach through by creating materials in languages other than English, including possible Haitian Krèyol, Portuguese, Spanish, one or more East African languages. There were also questions regarding how members of the public could accompany CPD officers in their patrols through "walk alongs" and "ride alongs." Bishop Teixeira asked if the Board could produce an annual report, and Ms. Wunsch noted the importance of transparency and communication with the community as part of best practices Board chair Betts explained that there is an annual reporting of the work of the Board to the City Council, and Acting Executive Secretary Corr mentioned that there are also quarterly reports to the City, and described the information from the Board that is printed in the City's annual report to the public. Board member Peters made a motion that the Board review and respond to the Cambridge Review Committee report. The motion was seconded by Board member Melucci and approved in a unanimous vote

Board member Melucci moved to go into executive session pursuant to M.G.L. chap. 39, s.23B(2). The motion was seconded by Board member Peters and approved in a unanimous vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM after executive session.